

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF ADMINISTRATION
BULLETIN NO. 3.4
REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAVEL-RELATED
EXPENSES

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ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN 3.4

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ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN NO. 3.4

I. OVERVIEW

The Commissioner of Personnel is required under 32 V.S.A. § 463 & 464 to enforce all regulations pertaining to claims for reimbursement of travel expenses when away from home and/or office (32 V.S.A. § 1261). However, the discretion to assign activities that result in personal expense claims lies with the head of each employing department. Thus, the responsibility for authorizing employees to incur only those expenses that are consistent with this regulation remains with the supervisors and managers within the reimbursing department. Upon written request of a department head, the Commissioner of Personnel may approve exceptions to these regulations provided that the exceptions are in the best interest of the State and entirely consistent with statutes and negotiated agreements.

The Secretary of Administration has the final decision in any dispute or question concerning travel or personal expense reimbursement at State expense, and he/she may authorize, in advance, deviations (still necessarily consistent with negotiated agreements and statutes) from these regulations when, in his/her judgment, such action is in the best interest of the State.

Personal expenses incurred by employees not covered within the scope of 32 V.S.A. § 1261, (most often because they are not associated with travel and do not occur away from home and/or office) should not be processed as a personal expense claim. These types of expenses should be processed through the Commissioner of Finance and Management on a standard State invoice. Examples of these types of expenses would be the purchase of supplies or equipment or a department head purchasing snacks to be served at a business meeting. Department heads shall not allow their employees to make these types of purchases at their own expense. A State credit card from the State Treasurer should be used in these situations. The cost of the annual fee for the State credit card will be paid by individual departments.

II. FINANCING BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENSES

42. **Direct Payment-** Costs of public transportation, lodging, group meetings and registration fees may be billed directly by the provider or travel agent to the employee's department or the department may use a state credit card to pay such cost. Direct billing for lodging shall not include meals, tips, telephone calls or other incidental expenses. Direct payment for reservations should be limited to a minimum deposit. The employee

should not make any request for reimbursement of expenses which have been directly paid. Direct payment should be processed through the Department of Finance and Management on a Standard State Invoice (AAF-23). Any attempt by an employee to obtain reimbursement for a claim paid by direct billing may be considered an illegal act and treated accordingly.

43. **Cash Advance for Travel Expense** - An employee may request an advance of funds for the purpose of out-of-state travel. Advances will be issued and settled by rules and regulations established by the State Treasurer. (32 V.S.A. 32 § 466). The requirements are as follows:
- a. A minimum advance of \$100.00 is required. Amounts should be in whole dollars and cannot exceed the estimated cost of the trip. Any funds advanced may only be used by the employee for the purpose of out-of-state travel expenses incurred on State business.
 - b. Finance Form AAF-10 must be signed by the employee's department head. Approval by the Secretary of Administration or his/her authorized agent is required for all travel outside the United States. The employee should send or present all copies of this form to the State Treasurer's office. The Treasurer's office will retain the white and pink copies and return the yellow to the employee to submit with an expense voucher.
 - c. Advances can be picked up no more than 10 days prior to departure. If picking up an advance for someone else, written authorization from the traveler must accompany the request each time funds are advanced. Expenses must be submitted immediately upon return from the trip for which funds were advanced.
 - d. It is recommended that registrations and airfare be billed directly or paid in advance by the department.
 - e. If an employee who has an advance changes jobs within the State or leaves State employment, the note becomes payable on demand. If the employee should default on repayment of any outstanding advance, the advance shall be repaid from the appropriation of the department that employed him/her at the time the advance was made.
 - f. In-state travel advances will not be approved, with the following exception: if extended in-state travel is necessary, the commissioner or secretary of a department or agency may request a special advance on behalf of the employee using form AAF-10B. This is used rarely and must be approved by the State Treasurer.
44. **State Credit Card** - To avoid frequent travel advances, an appointing authority may request a State credit card for those employees who, in the

performance of their duties, are normally or regularly required to travel. Employees who use the State credit card in lieu of personal credit cards or cash travel advances should use the State credit card only for reimbursable expenses while on State business. No cash advances are allowed on State credit cards. On receipt of the monthly credit card invoice, the employee will be responsible for payment of the entire invoice amount, not a minimum or partial payment.

Please Note: The State is not responsible for travel costs charged to the State credit card; each credit card holder is financially responsible. Timely requests for reimbursement will assure funds are received in time to pay the credit card invoice. Department Managers may also obtain credit cards from the State Treasurer which can be billed directly to the Department, although reimbursable travel expenses cannot be charged to such cards. Direct payment, as outlined in Section 1, Paragraph 1 above, can be made using a State credit card. Other restrictions by the Treasurer's office on the use of credit cards will be observed.

45. **Expense Reimbursement** - All state employee claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be approved and fully justified by an employee's supervisor unless otherwise provided by law or negotiated agreement. Claims must be supported by furnishing proof of payment or paid receipts. Employees may be required to provide receipts for meal reimbursement claims. All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be submitted on a Request for Reimbursement of Expense form (AA-8).

a. Explanation and Justification of Claims

Employees must state the purpose of activities which give rise to claims, and the dates, times and locations at which these activities occurred. Persons whose regular duties require them to undertake extensive or frequent travel need not give detailed explanations for claims for repetitious work activities, (e.g., time, purpose of client visits by a social worker).

b. Reimbursable Claims

To the limits set forth by statute (32 V.S.A. § 1261) and negotiated agreements, only actual and necessary expenses which are incurred for travel in the conduct of State's business by persons acting for the State shall be reimbursed. Costs, however necessary, incurred for the sole benefit of the employee (such as, but not necessarily limited to, travel loan finance charges, entertainment charges, personal grooming cost other than the care of clothing on extended trips, extra meals, coffee breaks, refreshments and other purely personal expenses) are not reimbursable.

c. Avoiding Unnecessary Claims

All activities should be conducted in the most economical and prudent

manner possible, considering direct and indirect costs to the State and the health and safety of all employees. Supervisors should remain constantly aware of this section.

d. Individual Submission of Claims

State employees shall not request reimbursement for claims that include expenses incurred on behalf of other State employees or family members. However, when an employee is acting as an agent of the State and incurs expenses on behalf of a person(s) in the care and custody of the State or who is a guest of the State, that employee may claim the actual and necessary expenses as separate entries on his/her claim form within the limits set forth for employees. Exceptions to the above must be approved by the employee's department head.

e. Legibility and Permanence of Expense Claims

All expenses for employees must be submitted on forms approved by the Commissioner of Personnel. The form must be completed in full and legible. All expenses for non-state employees paid via standard State invoice must be submitted on forms approved by the Commissioner of Finance.

f. Frequency of Claims

All employees who incur expenses for travel should file a request for reimbursement of expenses to his/her supervisor at the close of each pay period. Each department supervisor should ensure that employee expense claims are processed expeditiously and submitted to the Department of Personnel to meet the earliest possible deadline for payment. Employees should make every effort to submit their claims for expense reimbursement within sixty (60) days. Claims submitted after 60 days will not be paid except as covered by collective bargaining agreement or with the approval of the Secretary of Administration.

g. Reimbursement by Third Party

When part or all of the reimbursable items on an expense claim are payable by a third party (e.g., the Federal government, a private organization), the party should be identified, the amount disclosed and an explanation of the reimbursement procedure attached. A third party shall not reimburse an employee of the State directly, but may reimburse the department for whom the employee works.

h. Approval of Expense Claims

All personal expense claims submitted must have the full, legible signature in ink of both the employee and the immediate supervisor. Immediate supervisor means the person who normally assigns, supervises and has knowledge of the employee's work activities. In any case, the person approving a particular claim should be the supervisory person who

has the best knowledge as to the validity of the claim(s) being made. The Commissioner of Personnel may determine who should be the approving authority for unusual claims and may require more than one approving signature on any claim. Signature by rubber stamp is not acceptable.

i. Payment of Expense Claims

Reimbursement of employee claims shall be charged against an appropriation of the department in which the employee is regularly employed.

j. Licenses

The State is not obligated to pay for the cost of any employee licenses, except Commercial Driver's License (CDL) as outlined in the State/VSEA contract. Therefore, no request for payment or reimbursement for such license costs will be approved, unless a Department can provide documentation to the Commissioner of Personnel that there is a valid and binding past practice.

III. TRANSPORTATION

46. **Assignment of Official Duty Station** - Appointing authorities shall establish an official duty station for each employee. A work station shall be the town or city where the employee has been assigned to perform most of his/her official duties. Official duty stations may be changed in accordance with applicable negotiated agreements. Change of station should not be made for the personal convenience of employees or solely to avoid or incur reimbursement of expenses.
47. **Mileage Reimbursement** - All State employees are entitled to be reimbursed for the use of a privately- owned or leased motor vehicle at a rate per mile established by the negotiated agreements. Such rate shall be the same regardless of type of motor vehicle unless otherwise provided. Reimbursement shall be for miles actually and necessarily traveled in the performance of official duties. Miles traveled between his/her place of residence and duty station shall not be reimbursed. If an employee is called-in under the 'Call-In' provision of the negotiated agreements or is required by the employer to make multiple trips between home and office in addition to the normal commute, such additional trips shall be reimbursable.
48. **Use of Privately-Owned Vehicles** - The use of a privately-owned or leased vehicle should not be allowed if a State vehicle is available for use by the employee. Fares paid by a State employee to another State employee are not reimbursable.
49. **Travel Routing** - Travel should be by the most direct or economical route except in instances where the use of a particular route may be impossible or unduly hazardous. Unusual circumstances must be explained on the

expense form (i.e., missing an exit on the interstate system). Detours for personal convenience or personal business are not reimbursable.

50. **Insurance** - Vermont State law requires vehicles to be insured for liability at a rate not less than the State minimum coverage. In addition, any losses or damages to the privately-owned vehicle is the owner/operator's responsibility. In no instance will the state be responsible for physical damage to the employee's vehicle.

The State of Vermont shall not be held liable for any damages incurred by an employee because of an accident involving the use of a privately-owned or leased vehicle used on state business. This policy does not affect the State's liability as an employer under laws governing Worker's Compensation.

51. **Traffic Violations** - Fines for traffic or parking violations will not be reimbursed.
52. **Vehicle Supplies, Parts and Services Not Reimbursable** - Reimbursement of charges for gasoline, accessories, damages, repairs, depreciation, anti-freeze, towing, insurance and other similar expenditures are not allowed on personal vehicles. The standard reimbursement rate per mile covers all expenses for the use of a privately-owned vehicle.
53. **Parking and Tolls** - Actual and necessary expenditures for tolls and parking may be claimed. When possible, receipts should be submitted.
54. **Private Planes** - The expense for the use of a privately owned airplane may be allowed provided the rate does not exceed commercial rates and is approved in advance by the Commissioner of Personnel.
55. **Common Carrier Fares** - Fares for various types of common carrier services are authorized for reimbursement (i.e., taxi, bus, train, ferries, limousine).
56. **Rented Vehicles** - The department head may authorize the use of rented motor vehicles. While it is up to the individual department head to establish policy on rented vehicles, it is recommended that the daily insurance coverage offered by the leasing company be purchased for short duration rentals. The actual receipted costs of rentals will be reimbursed. A full explanation and the approval of the department head will be required for all such rentals. If a rental is made for the convenience of the employee, the State will only reimburse the contractually authorized rate for miles driven on state business.
57. **Trips** - When mileage is submitted for reimbursement, the expense claims must show the starting location, furthest point traveled to and the ending location (city/town) for each trip. The beginning and ending times of all trips should be shown when meals or lodging expenses are submitted for reimbursement.

IV. OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

58. **Approval** - All out-of-state travel requiring overnight stays, regardless of whether any cost is incurred, must be approved by the Secretary of Administration, or designee, or by a constitutional officer, or designee, in advance of each trip on Form AAF-10 (Authorization for Travel and Advance of Funds). An approved copy of this form must be attached to all claims requesting expense reimbursement for out-of-state expenses, regardless of whether or not the employee had an Advance of Funds.
59. **Use of Travel Agent Services** - Departments may use the services of a travel agent for out-of-state transportation cost for their employees. However, payments to travel agents should be processed through the Department of Finance and Management on a standard State invoice or through a State credit card.
60. **Limits on Reimbursement** - Reimbursement for transportation will be limited to the most economical method available, taking into account alternative transportation modes and the value of the employee's time.
61. **Means of Travel** - Any normal means used for approved travel is eligible for expense reimbursement.
62. **Documentation of Costs** - Receipts, cancelled ticket stubs, or any other type of documentation, which prove actual expenditures, must be provided for costs of public transportation other than local taxi, limousine or bus service. An employee may be reimbursed only for expenses actually incurred, therefore proof of payment must be presented with the request. (32 V.S.A. § 463)
63. **Travel at Extra Cost** - If the mode of transportation does not conflict with the eds of the department, the employee may use any form of transportation, but can only be reimbursed for the amount which would have been paid had the least expensive mode been selected. In any such case, the cost of both modes of transportation must be shown on the expense account claim form.
64. **Indirect Routes, Interrupted Travel** - Any extra expense which is a result of an individual traveling by an indirect route or caused by interrupting travel for the individual's own convenience shall not be submitted for reimbursement. Additional expense incurred by taking advantage of 'Super Saver' air fares (e.g., an additional day lodging/meals, other transportation cost enroute to the destination, and overtime, if applicable) may be incurred where it can be justified that the net effect, when compared with the standard air fare to the destination, is a savings to the state.
65. **Flight Tickets** - Airline tickets must be attached to claims for trips involving air travel to justify the employee's itinerary and related expenses. When the cost of tickets are paid in advance by the department, the expense form should indicate this information. The cost of airline tickets may be submitted for reimbursement, if through no fault of the employee, a trip is cancelled and the cost of ticket is lost. An explanation must accompany any such request for reimbursement.

V. LODGING

66. **Claims** - Claims for lodging shall be limited to charges which are both reasonable and necessary. State agencies should always strive to make a direct payment for lodging, instead of reimbursement to the employee. When direct payment is made in advance to reserve a room, the cost should be limited to the minimum deposit required by the lodging facility. In unusual circumstances, and when fully explained, a direct payment may be made in excess of the minimum deposit.
67. **Special Rates - Adequate Identification** - All State agencies, employees and agents should request special government rates when making reservations for lodging. (Many hotels/motels offer government or military plan (G.M.P) special rates.) To obtain these rates, you are required to notify the lodging establishments at the time you check in. Since most establishments will request identification, employees should be prepared to properly identify themselves with a State employee identification card. (These cards can be obtained at DMV for a nominal fee).
68. **Documentation of Claims** - Receipts for lodging must be on a receipt of the lodging establishment and must show either proof of payment or proof of a charge on a credit card. Hand written receipts from small lodging establishments are acceptable. If a State or personal credit card is used, the credit card slip must be submitted. An employee may cross out his/her I.D. number on a personal credit card slip. Hotel vouchers must show date, cost of room, name of employee and number of occupants in the room.
69. **Lodging Rate Limits** - Reimbursement is limited to the rate charge of a single room. Double rooms offered at a single room rate will be considered single rooms. The maximum allowable rate of reimbursement for lodging will be the government rate offered by the facility.
70. **Employee Liability for Unnecessary Charges** - Charges for an employee's failure to observe check-out time or to cancel a guaranteed hotel reservation will be considered an unnecessary expense and ineligible for reimbursement.
71. **In-state Lodging** - After considering all costs (meals and lodging versus mileage and travel time), if it is less expensive for an employee to stay overnight, the department head may approve overnight in-state lodging.

If an employee is required to be away from his/her official duty station and is also required to work at least five (5) hours, including travel, beyond his/her normal work day, lodging expense will be allowed provided the work place is at least forty (40) miles from the employee's home. Lodging may be allowed if hazardous travel conditions or health/safety conditions exist and are fully explained on the expense claim. Any exceptions to the above must have the prior approval of the Commissioner of Personnel.

VI. MEALS

72. **Supervisor Approval** - Upon the approval by the immediate supervisor, all state employees** when on official duty, while away from home and office will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals taken, subject to the provisions of and maximum reimbursement rates permitted by the State Employees' Bargaining Agreement, or as permitted under special provision in Section VI (5) below. All claims for meals must indicate where and when the meal was taken.

The supervisor's approval should be based on the following: whether the employee was on official duty; whether the meal could not have been reasonably taken at the employee's home or official duty station; or whether the activity could have been planned for a different time. Being away from home or office during the normal meal time will not necessarily entitle the employee for reimbursement, (e.g., returning to the office at 1:00 p.m. from a morning meeting).

73. **Mid-Tour Meals** - A State employee's** eligibility for an in-state mid-tour meal requires that the employee be away from home and office on official duty for at least six full hours during the regularly scheduled shift in accordance with applicable negotiated agreements. An appointing authority may revoke mid-tour meal reimbursement privileges where there is continuing indication of abuse under applicable bargaining unit agreements. The mid-tour meal entitlement shall not apply to highway maintenance workers on official duty within their normal district assignment; however, such employees may be eligible for paid meal time while in an overtime status.
74. **Breakfast Reimbursement** - Breakfast will only be reimbursed on the morning following a reimbursable overnight stay or, where reasonable, in extraordinary situations which are fully explained (e.g., departing home before 5:30 a.m. for a meeting).
75. **Dinner Reimbursement** - When fully explained, the cost of a dinner may be reimbursed when the employee is eligible to claim lodging or is required to work well beyond the normal dinner hour and is required to be away from home or office. If dinner time falls in a scheduled work schedule, it is subject to Section VI (2) above.

** Non-management employees, State police, State police supervisors and corrections unit employees are not normally eligible for in-state, mid-tour meal reimbursement. Supervisors may be eligible for an in-state, mid-tour meal reimbursement if they are away from home and office (duty station) on official duties for at least six full hours during the regularly scheduled shift.

76. **Special Provisions**

State employees participating in seminars, conventions, training or conference sessions may claim reimbursement for meal expenses incurred without regard to location of the meal or meal maximum provided the meal is part of a prearranged or programmed meeting in which all participants are served from a single preselected menu with no control over the cost of the meal. This must be fully explained and include the approval or prior approval of the department head when requesting reimbursement.

State employees required to attend a meeting or seminar where a meal is part of the program with no single preselected menu, in the town of their residence or duty station during their normal meal time, may be reimbursed for the meal within the maximums permitted by the State Employee's Bargaining Agreement, provided the request for reimbursement is either signed by the head of the department or includes the department head's prior approval.

Employees required to attend a business meeting after normal working hours and the time between the meeting and their quitting time is so short that it is not reasonable for them to travel to their residence for a meal, may request and receive reimbursement for that meal, even though it is taken at a work station, provided the request is either signed by the department head or includes the department head's prior approval.

Reimbursement will not be allowed for the cost of alcoholic beverages unless obtained by a law enforcement official as evidence. The maximum allowable reimbursement amount for subsistence as reflected in the State Employee's Bargaining Agreement includes meal, tax and gratuity.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS REIMBURSEMENTS

77. **Telephone Calls** - Claims for reimbursement for long distance telephone calls and telephone charges on hotel bills must be work-related and fully documented. Documentation must include name of party called, place called, date and statement of official business. Employees whose jobs require them to use either a cellular phone or home phone on a regular basis for state business should apply for a state phone. Costs of long distance business calls made from personal phones are reimbursable.
78. **Assistance Charges** - Assistance charges actually and necessarily incurred, such as wheelchairs, baggage-transportation, if properly explained, will be allowed.
79. **Emergency Purchases** - In the event small emergency purchases are incurred for official business, reimbursement may be made, if explained and accompanied by a receipted voucher.
80. **Traveler's Checks** - The cost of traveler's checks or certified checks purchased for the keeping of personal funds or travel advances in

connection with official travel outside of Vermont will be allowed upon presentation of a payment receipt, provided the total value of the purchased instruments is reasonable when compared to the actual reimbursement for the authorized travel.

81. **Foreign Exchange** - Expenses incurred in a foreign country will be reimbursed at the foreign exchange rate for that country on the date the expense was incurred. Employees submitting claims for foreign travel must provide evidence of the foreign exchange rate if any expenses are billed in foreign currency. Claims will not be processed until evidence of the rate is provided.
82. **Extended Trips - Special Claims** - On extended trips, certain additional expenses may be necessarily incurred. On trips over one week's duration or in the case of severe and unexpected weather conditions, reasonable and receipted claims for care of clothing may be allowed for reimbursement.

VIII. PAYMENT OF IN-STATE MOVING EXPENSES OF PERMANENT STATE EMPLOYEES

In-state moving expenses of permanent employees may be reimbursed when the employee is being transferred for the convenience of the State. Three bids are necessary to ensure reasonableness of the rates, and all three bids must be submitted in advance of incurring the expense to the Commissioner of Personnel for approval of reasonableness. The lowest bid need not be the one selected if it can be shown that the rates were reasonable and justification is provided for the bid chosen. The employee may move his/her own goods by use of rented equipment if such action is more economical for the State. Costs for such rental will be reimbursable.

The State does not pay claims for connection, stopover, second pickup or delivery, storage or special packing or handling charges. The State does not pay travel expenses for an individual and/or family to come to Vermont to locate housing or for temporary living quarters.

IX. INTERVIEW EXPENSES

The department head may authorize reimbursement of interview expenses, not to exceed \$1,000 per individual, in instances where extreme recruiting difficulty is encountered due to lack of qualified applicants. The department may also authorize reimbursement of expenses for a second interview not to exceed \$1,000. Expenses in excess of \$1,000 per interview must have the prior approval of the Commissioner of Personnel. All requests for payment must be submitted to the Department of Finance and Management on a standard State invoice.

X. PAYMENT OF MOVING EXPENSES FOR CERTAIN NEW EMPLOYEES

Based upon extreme difficulty of recruitment of professional, technical or otherwise scarce skills, and the availability of a minimum number of applicants, the Commissioner of Personnel may authorize payment up to a maximum of \$4,000 for expenses incurred in the moving of household furniture and personal effects by new employees not within reasonable commuting distance of their assignment within the State.

Three bids are necessary to ensure reasonableness of the rates, and all three bids must be submitted *in advance of incurring the expense* and provided to the Commissioner of Personnel for approval of reasonableness. The lowest bid need not be the one selected if it can be shown that the rates were reasonable and justification is provided for the bid chosen. The employee may move his/her own goods by use of rented equipment if such action is more economical for the State. Costs for such rental will be reimbursable.

An agency/department head wishing to offer this benefit to a qualified candidate must request the written approval of the Commissioner of Personnel prior to making an offer to the applicant and subsequent to completion of the recruitment and examination process. If approved, the agency head must request three bids as required in Section VIII, and include those bids and the Commissioner of Personnel's approval when requesting payment.

The State does not pay claims for connection, stopover, second pickup or delivery, storage or special packing or handling charges. The State does not pay travel expenses for an individual and/or family to come to Vermont to locate housing or for temporary living quarters.

This Bulletin supersedes and rescinds previous editions of Bulletin 3.4 and any amendments thereto.

Approved By Kathleen C. Hoyt, August 13, 1999

Secretary, Agency of Administration